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The U.K. has rolled out abortion censorship zones across England and Wales

Sun 5:05 pm +00:00, 10 Nov 2024 ¹

posted by Gordon



By Standing for Freedom Center Staff / Friday, November 8, 2024

The new law, passed in March, now takes effect, even as pro-lifer Adam Smith-Connor appeals his conviction for silently praying near the abortion clinic where his unborn son was killed.

[UPDATE] Late last week, the U.K. government, with guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), implemented censorship zones across the entirety of England and Wales that ban protests within 150 meters (492 feet) of an abortion clinic.

CPS officials claim that silent prayer is "not necessarily a criminal offence" under the new law, but that suggestion comes just two weeks after Adam Smith-Connor, an Army veteran, was convicted for silently praying inside of one of those "buffer zones."

Previously, these censorship zone laws were limited to a few localities. Nonetheless, police had been aggressive in enforcing them, leading to numerous arrests of people who were silently praying or holding a sign featuring a Bible verse. Among those arrested and interrogated were pastors and priests.

The situation got darker in March 2023, when Parliament voted to expand the "Public Spaces Protection Order" to all of England and Wales. Moreover, lawmakers voted down an amendment that would have allowed silent prayer inside the zones.

Nonetheless, as the censorship zones, which may or may not be marked, went live last Friday, CPS made it a point to confirm that silent prayer isn't automatically a violation of the legislation. It issued guidance to police departments, stating that while silent prayer and other nonviolent actions could fall under the law, "factual questions" could arise as to whether the prayer is a protest.

"A person who carries out any of these activities [including silent prayer] within a safe access zone will not necessarily commit a criminal offence," CPS stated. "Prosecutors will need to consider not only all the facts and circumstances of the particular conduct but also the context in which the conduct takes place."

It stated that prosecutors would need to show "intent" or "recklessness" in that the silent prayer was meant to influence, harass, or disturb a woman entering an abortion clinic.

In the case of Smith-Connor, CPS argued in court that he had such an intent. The Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council ultimately ruled against Smith-Connor, citing his known pro-life views and that people could have known he was praying because part of the time his head may have been slightly bowed and his hands clasped at his waist. The court said he deserved to be punished due to his "disapproval of abortion."

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During sentencing, Smith-Connor was fined £9,000, or \$11,686, but given conditional release, meaning he won't go to jail unless he gets into any other trouble with the law.

Smith-Connor and his legal representation Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) U.K. announced last week that they are appealing the case.

They claim he was not overt in his action, saying that his eyes were open, he was standing in a normal position, and his back was to the entrance.

Nonetheless, Jeremiah Igunnubole, legal counsel for ADF U.K., gave credit to CPS for its recent guidance on silent prayer, saying,

"This is commonsense and consistent with the absolute right to freedom of thought protected under domestic and international law. Previous Home Secretaries and the magistrates' court have repeatedly concluded that silent prayer, within itself, cannot constitute a criminal offence. Now that CPS guidance has recognized the same, it is incumbent on police officers and local authorities to refrain from ideological and discriminatory interpretations which seek to criminalise prayer itself rather than overt conduct amounting to harassment and intimidation."

He continued,

"It's for this reason that we are glad to support Adam as he pursues an appeal of his conviction for praying silently without engaging anyone or being obtrusive in any way. This is a watershed moment for British freedoms, and one the public must not take lightly. A failure to protect thought and peaceful conduct anywhere creates a threat to these rights everywhere. Buffer zones or otherwise, we should uncompromisingly safeguard the rights on which our democracy is based."

Smith-Connor was first arrested in October 2022 for violating a buffer zone law near an abortion clinic. He was praying silently for the son who had been aborted there 22 years prior.

A similar abortion buffer zone law took effect in Scotland in September 2024.

Read more: <https://www.standingforfreedom.com/2024/11/the-u-k-has-rolled-out-abortion-censorship-zones-across-england-and-wales/>

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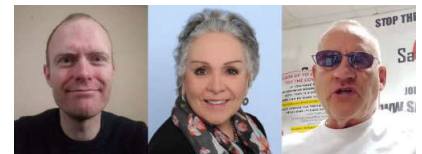
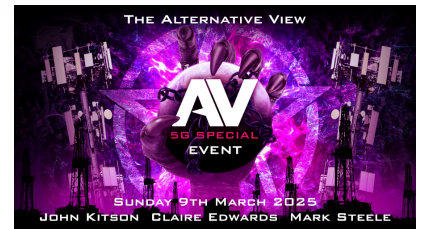
pete fairhurst 2 says:

10 Nov 2024 17:50

What sort of a mad world are we living in? They want to criminalise silent prayer? That is ridiculous in the extreme, completely insane

And I suppose easily avoided if one simply doesn't confess to any authority. How could they possibly know what you were doing unless you tell them yourself? Haven't we got a right to silence, or has that been taken away too?

Abortion is the killing of an undeveloped human being. It is impossible to morally justify and is a repugnant act by any measure. Stopping folk praying for those lost lives is unacceptable in a free society, in fact it proves that the society is NOT free



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MARIA WHEATLEY

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01:23:01

The Alternative View Presents Maria Wheatley

Maria Wheatley presenting the first session from the Alternative View Presents in Glastonbury 20th October 2024.

THOMAS SHERIDAN

THE MAGICAL LANDSCAPES OF THESE SACRED ISLANDS UNLEASHED

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01:46:29

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Thomas Sheridan presenting the second session from the Alternative View Presents in Glastonbury 20th October 2024.



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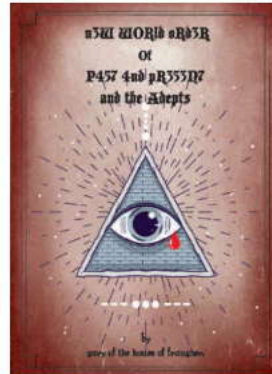
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